

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KINSHA 02894 022013Z

46

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

----- 033673

P 021545Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7283

S E C R E T KINSHASA 2894

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU'S CURRENT ABSENCE FROM ZAIRE

REF: A) KINSHASA 2702; B) KINSHASA 2593

1. AS REPORTED REF A, MOBUTU'S DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE MARCH 27 WAS PRECEDED BY A FLOOD OF RUMORS AROUND TOWN TO THE EFFECT THAT HE INTENDED TO ABANDON THE PRESIDENCY OR AT LEAST LEAVE THE COUNTRY FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD. FOLLOWING HIS DEPARTURE, THE PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT MOBUTU HAD BEEN ORDERED BY HIS DOCTORS TO TAKE A MEDICAL REST AND THAT HE WOULD BE GONE FOR TWO WEEKS. THIS, HOWEVER, DID NOT SERVE TO SQUELCH THE RUMORS, AND THEY CONTINUE TO ABOUND: MOBUTU, WILL ALL HIS FAMILY, HAS LEFT FOR GOOD; MOBUTU WILL STAY AWAY AS LONG AS SIX MONTHS WHILE THE SHOCK WAVES FROM DEVALUATION AND THE AUSTERITY PROGRAM RUN THEIR COURSE; MOBUTU HAS TRIED, SO FAR UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO PERSUADE SEVERAL OF HIS LIEUTENANTS TO TAKE OVER THE REIGNS OF GOVERNMENT; ETC., ETC.

2. EVEN THOUGH SOME OF OUR MORE RELIABLE CONTACTS SEEM TO PLACE SOME CREDENCE IN THE LESS EXTREME VERSIONS OF THESE STORIES (E.G., THAT MOBUTU DECIDED TO GET OUT AND STAY OUT UNTIL HE IS ASSURED THAT THE ECONOMY CAN BE SALVAGED WITHOUT A POLITICAL UPEHEAVAL), WE HAVE SO FAR NO SOLID EVIDENCE THAT MOBUTU'S TRIP IS ANYTHING MORE THAN WHAT THE GOZ SAYS IT IS -- A REST AND MEDICAL CHECK-UP. THERE ARE, IN FACT, SOME INDICATIONS THAT MOBUTU MAY HAVE SOME GENUINE HEALTH PROBLEMS TO LOOK AFTER, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANYTHING VERY SERIOUS. (DURING

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 KINSHA 02894 022013Z

MY LAST MEETING WITH HIM HE COMPLAINED ABOUT A KNEE INJURY THAT

CONTINUED TO BOTHER HIM.) MOREOVER, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT MOBUTU HAS NOT SPENT ANY TIME IN EUROPE SINCE EARLY 1974, WHEN HE SPENT SEVEN WEEKS THERE SHORTLY AFTER ANNOUNCING THE DRASTIC MEASURES TO ZAIRIANIZE THE ECONOMY. SOME OBSERVERS HERE SEE MOBUTU'S PRESENT ABSENCE, IN THE WAKE OF ANNOUNCING DEVALUATION AND NEW AUSTERITY MEASURES, AS FITTING INTO A PATTERN OF BEING OFF THE SCENE DURING DIFFICULT PERIODS OF IMPLEMENTING MAJOR REFORMS.

3. IN PRIVATE TALKS SINCE MOBUTU'S DEPARTURE, THE GOZ'S TWO TOP OFFICIALS, BISENGIMANA AND NGUZA, HAVE SPOKEN MATTER-OF-FACTLY TO US OF THE PRESIDENT'S ANTICIPATED RETURN SOMETIME IN LATE APRIL. THE EXACT DATE WILL PROBABLY DEPEND IN GOOD MEASURE ON THE TIMING OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT HERE, AND IN RAISING WITH ME THE OTHER DAY SOME OF HIS TENTATIVE THINKING ABOUT THAT VISIT, NGUZA MADE CLEAR HIS ASSUMPTION THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD PERSONALLY PLAY A MAJOR ROLE AS HOST. NGUZA, INCIDENTALLY, TOLD ME THAT HE HAD BEEN DESIGNATED TO HEAD THE GOVERNMENT (EXECUTIVE COUNCIL) DURING MOBUTU'S ABSENCE, WHILE ILEO HEADED THE PARTY (POLITICAL BUREAU).

4. I REPORT ALL THIS BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUED SPECULATION CONCERNING MOBUTU'S PLANS AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IT MAY EVENTUALLY SPILL OVER INTO THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS -- PARTICULARLY IF MOBUTU'S ABSENCE IS PROLONGED BEYOND THE TWO WEEKS ANNOUNCED. WITH WORSENING SHORTAGES AND RAPIDLY RISING PRICES OF ALMOST ALL GOODS AND SERVICES HERE, POPULAR DISCONTENT COULD WELL RISE IN THE DAYS AHEAD; AND MOBUTU'S ABSENCE AT THIS CRITICAL TIME COULD SERVE TO DIRECT SOME OF THIS DISCONTENT RATHER SHARPLY TOWARD HIS LEADERSHIP. WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO KEEP OUR EAR TO THE GROUND WITH RESPECT TO ANY SUCH TREND. BUT, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, WE DO NOT RPT NOT PERCEIVE ANY DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE MAKING.

CUTLER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEALTH, GOVERNMENT REFORM, CAT-B, CHIEF OF STATE, ALLEGATIONS, POPULAR SUPPORT, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976KINSHA02894
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: I
Film Number: n/a
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197604104/aaaadlqy.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 76 KINSHASA 2702, 76 KINSHASA 2593
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MOBUTU'S CURRENT ABSENCE FROM ZAIRE
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, XG, CG, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006